



Minutes from the regular meeting of the
Asheville Downtown Commission
July 13, 2007 at 8:30 am
Office of Economic Development
29 Haywood Street in downtown Asheville

Members present: Dwight Butner, Kitty Love, Jesse Plaster, John Rogers, Julie Brandt, Brad Galbraith, Jan Davis, Peter Alberice, Pam Myers

Members absent: Guadalupe Chavarria, Pat Whalen

Staff attending: Janet Dack, Alan Glines, Jessica Levensgood, Bob Oast

Guests: partial list: Steve McManus, Karen Tessier, Charles Russell, Larry Turner, Bob Wagner, Dave Tomsy, Betty W. Lee, Harry Weiss, Stan Greenberg, Brian Gillespie, Irene Jurczyk, Andy Archie, Mara O. Evans, Kim MacQueen, Eric Valez

Vice Chairman John Rogers opened the meeting at 8:30 am

Approval of Minutes: Commission will not take action on minutes

DESIGN REVIEW:

The Ellington, formal review

Jan Davis was recused as this project would be coming before City Council.

Staff presentation

Staff member Glines noted there had been a successful motion from the Commission to continue the formal review of Ellington at the last (June) meeting; the staff report addresses what modifications to the design standards the Commission is being asked to consider, these include:

30' setback off Biltmore; Pedestrian entrance on Biltmore, 50% fenestration for pedestrian scale activity; expanses of solid walls; 70% glazing as storefronts on key pedestrian streets.

The Commission had asked development team for more information on twelve items (see June minutes).

Staff discussion of some of the modifications and/or twelve items:

The development team now providing retail front on Aston; standard requiring no solid wall exceeding 20' (Lexington) could be met with art vitrines/murals; developers providing additional architectural details/improvements of building on western side; vehicular entrance along Biltmore Ave had review by Technical Review Committee, which has the official responsibility regarding such a traffic issue, on Monday - Mr. Putnam (City Traffic Engineer) felt that safety issues had been addressed and that there was nothing in the code to prohibit that design; pedestrian entrance on Biltmore as patio/café could meet requirement.

Development team discussion:

Refinements eliminated some of the requests for flexible standards, but not all, teams desire is to stay committed to overall design.

Architect Gary Kerr reviewed refinements to the design.

Development team handed out a memo detailing the proposed art program

Steve McManus addressed questions on local work force housing program.

Bob Waggoner from the Community Foundation was available to answer questions regarding their management of the program.

The commission discussed the projected dollar amounts created for the fund over time, projected number of units created.

Members acknowledged that this affordable housing issue and proposed program was beyond the purview of the design review itself, but was of sincere interest to the commission as it relates to the health and vitality of downtown. City Attorney Bob Oast noted that City Council will be interested in the program during their review of the project, and that they look to the Downtown Commission to recommend on the design.

Motion:

Dwight Butner made a motion to approve design; Brad Galbraith seconded

Commission discussion:

Discussion on motion: some members were not ready to vote - the commission subsequently discussed with themselves and the development team:

Building signage; smart growth; traffic impacts; quality of life; pedestrian friendliness; the design review process and resultant changes; height; conflict of interest; scope of recommendation to Council; and on-street parking loss.

Public Comment:

Kim McQueen: downtown resident, property owner, small business owner on Haywood Street. Wants density, project will create a more walk-able downtown, need more hotel rooms downtown, people out of cars and on their feet

Charles Russell: CPA, business man in downtown Asheville for over 30 years, wants to see Asheville grow from rebirth to a mature city.

Bob Wagner: from the Western North Carolina Community Foundation, excited about the project and that it can serve as a model for other developers.

Andy Archie: in favor of building, wants quality tenant, flagship for Asheville, won't have better opportunity than this project.

Eric Valez: in favor of building, is a small business owner.

Mara Evans: resident of Buncombe Co., not against development of downtown, but need buildings to be in context of what this City is, doesn't think this is quality for Asheville.

Vote: Project approved, 7-1 in favor with Julie Brandt voting no.

Hotel Indigo- formal review

Staff presentation

Planner Jessica Levengood discussed the plans for the proposed 13 story mixed hotel/condominiums on the old Chamber of Commerce site on Haywood Street.

The Commission is being asked to consider seven modifications to design standards.

- set back from Interstate
- parking placement between building and abutting street
- corner placement of building
- principal pedestrian entrance
- 50% openings requirement
- 20' expanse of solid wall
- landscaping

This site is highly constrained due to its placement, shape and size, and the overall design meets the intentions of the standards, therefore staff recommends approval.

Development team discussion:

Denny Pearson, owner of Chestnut B&B, explained his interest in the project and why he has chosen to work with Indigo Hotels for this site.

Alan Wiskopf discussed the design, including materials, and went over the teams requests for modifications.

Commission discussion:

The Commission discussed: the need for the design presented to be the exact design development team is proposing to move forward with; that a materials review can come back but the architectural design had to be final; negative effect of design by removing windows; pedestrian accessibility; using the site as a gateway from downtown to Montford; height and height compared to Battery Park; commitment to sloped roof; DOT right of way; signage seen from interstate; sign ordinance; handicap accessibility; possible pergola or trellis usage.

Public comment: none

Motion: Jesse Plaster made a motion to conditionally approve the design, providing:

1. Windows will be, at a minimum, according to elevations presented (north elevation - 3 columns instead of 4 on main body of building, 1 column instead of 2 on full vertical elevation in middle of façade, keep column on most western edge: see image attached.
2. Roof design will be angled/pitched rather than flat across.
- 3.

Seconded by Julie Brandt

Vote: Design approved unanimously

Adjournment

Next regular scheduled meeting of the Downtown Commission is on August 10, 2007 at 8:30am in the Office of Economic Development

Minutes prepared by Janet Dack and Stephanie Monson